

ALBERTA HISTORY

Spring 2019 | Volume 67 | Number 2

A Quarterly Publication

\$5.50 in Canada



IN THIS ISSUE

McClellan Expedition

Tinchebray Agricultural Colony

To the Peace by Auto

The West in 1874

Gold Prospectors, 1892



A Red River cart, 1881

ALBERTA HISTORY

Spring 2019

Volume 67 | Number 2

Alberta History is published quarterly by The Historical Society of Alberta with assistance from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. Academic papers are refereed. Alberta History is indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index. The society assumes no responsibility for statements of fact or opinion made by authors.

Officers:

President	Tim Marriott
Past President	Linda Collier
1st Vice-President	Harry Sanders
2nd Vice-President	Linda Many Guns
Secretary	Belinda Crowson
Treasurer	Kathryn Robins
At Large	Ron Williams
	Janet Peterson
	Pablo Russell
	Rod Trentham
Honorary President	Dr. Hugh A. Dempsey

Chapter Presidents:

Chinook Country	Walt DeBoni
Lethbridge	Belinda Crowson
Central Alberta	Robert Lampard
Edmonton district	Sean Moir
Peace Country	Mary Nutting

Rates:

A subscription to Alberta History plus a membership in the Society is \$35 annually. A subscription without membership is \$25 annually. Individual back issues are \$5.00 each. Special Stampede Issue, 2012 – \$10.00.

Membership Address:

Historical Society of Alberta
Box 4035, Station C
Calgary AB T2T 5M9
e-mail: Albertahistory@telus.net
web: www.albertahistory.org
phone: 403-261-3662

Editorial Address:

Hugh A. Dempsey, Editor
95 Holmwood Avenue NW
Calgary, AB T2K 2G7
e-mail: potaina@shaw.ca

Return postage to Membership Address guaranteed

Printed by CBN Commercial Solutions, Calgary
Canada Post Agreement No. 40010031.

Contents



- 2 The McClellan Expedition of 1868
by Hugh A. Dempsey
- 8 Establishment of the
Tinchebray Agricultural Colony
by Henry Wostenberg
- 19 To the Peace River Area by Auto
- 23 The State of the West
Predictions of 1874
by Charles N. Bell
- 28 Book Reviews
by the Editor
- 28 Donations and Photo Credits



Cover Photo

Prospectors search for gold in this 1892 sketch by H. Kratzer.

THE MCCLELLAN EXPEDITION OF 1868



by
Hugh A. Dempsey

In the late 1860s, southern Alberta was virtually an unknown land for Europeans. There had been a few exploring expeditions by the Hudson's Bay Company but the area was firmly in the hands of the Blackfoot, who did not relish the invasion of their hunting grounds. This situation changed when gold was discovered in Montana Territory and on the upper waters of the North Saskatchewan River. This gave rise to the belief that there must be gold deposits all along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains from Rocky Mountain House to the Missouri River. One of the strong proponents of this idea was John L. McClellan, a veteran prospector from the gold fields of California and Montana. He decided to organize a prospecting party to search these lands for gold.

On April 9th, 1868, the *Helena Herald* reported the arrival of McClellan in that city where he was "raising a strong and well-equipped party for his exploration of the head waters of Bow River."¹ With local towns donating supplies and ammunition, 120 men indicated they were prepared to go. However, when the time came to actually leave, only one of the original volunteers actually appeared. "The fatigues and dangers attendant upon a journey of a thousand miles through a country inhabited only by savages, and to a great extent unknown," reported the *Montana Post*, "had no attractions for them."² In the end twenty-seven men from local towns joined the expedition.³

On May 5, 1868, the men gathered at Sun River, "each clothed in such uniform as his fancy or necessity might dictate, each armed with an improved rifle, six shooter and knife; and provided with ammunition to the extent of from one hundred and fifty to eight hundred rounds, and all anxious to plunge into the Indian country to search for gold... Upon fifty pack horses, which accompanied the expedition, were loaded provisions for ninety days, cooking and mining utensils and each other articles as might be needed during a three months sojourn in the wilderness."⁴

When the expedition arrived at the Teton River, McClellan took three men with him to explore the mountains in that region. Eight days later they returned having found no signs of gold. The party then crossed the Marias and Milk rivers until they reached the Milk River Ridge, which "separates the streams flowing into the Missouri from those to the north of it which find their way into Hudson Bay."

Thirty miles to the west, the party reached the head waters of Belly River, which included St. Mary's [Waterton] Lakes, "two beautiful liquid pearls, strung upon the sparkling stream, the glittering thread that there adorns the form of nature."

While prospecting in the vicinity of the lakes, it rained almost incessantly and the streams were all so swollen that it was next to impossible to search. Said the *Montana Post*,

Although no gold was discovered, there was opened a new page replete with beauty in the book of nature, a page replete and all the more beautiful because never gazed upon by man, at least not by civilized man, before.

On the banks of Belly River was discovered a bed of coal twelve feet in thickness. McClellan took pains to test its quality. He found that it burned as well as the best Pittsburgh coal and was equal to it in every respect. However, the men were looking for gold not coal.



Two prospectors search for gold in this 1892 Montana sketch by H. Kratzer.

Flowing into Belly River at the mouth of St. Mary's Lakes is a stream as large as Sun River [*Kennedy Creek], its banks lined with groves of cottonwoods, and its surroundings of mountain and prairie sufficient to call forth exclamations of delight even from a resident of Arcadia.

Up this stream Captain McClellan, with a single companion, Eli M. Jones, proceeded for a distance of 60 miles [*north of Chief Mountain], over a route where there were no trails, and nothing to indicate that even the Indians had visited it. Having completed their explorations thus far, and just as they emerged from a wide valley, covered to a great extent with timber and swamps, they were greeted with one of the most beautiful views of mountain scenery that America can boast of. The walls of a rocky canyon, rising almost perpendicularly to a height of one and two hundred feet, guarded the river like castle towers as it flowed between them, while through the gate which thus seemed to forbid passage to the Eden beyond, the two prospectors saw, half a mile before them, a succession of falls and rapids rising to a hundred and fifty feet [*Gros Ventre Falls].

Passing through the gate, Capt. McClellan and his companion, led as if it were by enchantment, and a desire to more closely inspect the recently discovered beauties, and to explore the country beyond, proceeded up the right bank of the river, to the foot of the falls. We cannot more briefly nor more accurately give an idea of these new found curiosities than by describing them as stone steps, three in number, cut in the solid rock, and carpeted with an ever changing stream; pure as the snows above, from which, as from a crystal wool, the fingers of the sun had woven it, and beautiful as it was pure. Upon either side rocky banks still arose, smooth and water-worn, to a distance of from eight to ten feet, their summits cushioned by thick set groves of pine.

The falls were respectively, commencing at the lower one, twenty-five, thirty-five, and forty feet in height, separated from each other by gentle rapids one hundred yards in length. The width of the upper fall was about fifty feet, and of the lower one, seventy-five feet. But where did the water come from, and what was beyond? A snowy conical peak raised its head above the upper fall as the gold hunters

looked up to it; but it seemed to be moved far back into the mountains, with much room left between itself and the Steps of Beauty for other wonders.

Capt. McClellan therefore clambered up to the level of the upper fall. Arrived there he saw spread out before him, a sheet of water fifteen miles in length, and from five to ten miles in width [*Cosley Lake]. This lake was of a heart shape, the lower point being at the falls, and the re-entrant angle directly opposite and five miles and upon each side of the lobes of the heart extended a distance of fifteen miles from the falls into the mountains, is situated the snow capped peak [*Cathedral Peak] previously mentioned. Its barren rocky face looming up against the sky; and rising perpendicularly from the water's edge to a height of a thousand feet.

On either side of this peak, and along its base, skirting the waters' edge, and casting their green shadows in the green shadows in the mountain mirror, were forests of pine, but still above them, and running far back into the mountains, were the rocky crags, covered on their summits with eternal snow. On the left hand, or southern side of the lake, there arose gradually a heavily timbered slope, culminating finally in a high mountain range [*Cosley Ridge]. On the northerly side of the lake extended a beautiful prairie for a great distance, having the appearance of a level meadow. Along the edge of this prairie, Capt McClellan and his companion followed the north bank of the lake to its highest point, where a stream, nearly as large as the Blackfoot River, enters it. This stream they ascended a distance of thirty miles, led on partially by hope of finding gold, but still more by new and beautiful scenes that were constantly greeting them as they advanced.

Having entered farther into the mountains at this point than ever men went before, and having made record of the fact on some trees, they started on their return – bade farewell to the lake, swam the river and returned to camp. The liquid ace of hearts as it lay upon the green cloth of the mountains had been very pretty to look upon, but failed to prove itself a winning card in the game for gold.

According to E.M. Jones, the party “prospected [Elk River] to the Kootenai, crossed the latter and prospected down to Stallion diggings.”⁵

When McClellan returned to the main camp, he found the men disappointed and discouraged by their failure to find gold. Only five of their number – Loup Newlan, William Ross, Michael Dillon, Jas. Abrams, and W. Dillon – were familiar with prospecting in the mountains. The others seemed generally indisposed to do anything save to consume the provisions. When McClellan heard of their complaints, he offered fifteen days' provisions and a riding horse to any man who wished to give up but no one accepted the proposition. Instead they tried to convince the whole expedition to give up and return home. In this they were unsuccessful.

A number of incidents occurred while the party was encamped at St. Mary's Lakes, which would prove interesting to our readers, but we can enumerate but one or two. On the 13th of June, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, there commenced, one of the most terrific storms that has ever been known in the mountains. It was accompanied by thunder and lightning to a degree perfectly appalling; and at about five o'clock, heaven's artillery commenced a cannonade of hail stones fully as large as hens' eggs. The “Flying Dutchman” was knocked down, others in the party sheltered their heads under saddles, dogs howled and ran for the brush, and the entire band of horses stampeded, swam Belly River and scattered over the prairie to such an extent that it took all that night and half the next day to recapture them.

On the 10th of June, and at St Mary's Lakes, Johnny Allen's crowd from Trinity Gulch, consisting of eight men, was met, and travelled with McClellan's party for two days but finally turned back. Leaving the Lakes, the expedition next reached, after two days, Kootenai Pass, through which flows a stream about as large as Sun River called Line River. Traces of a large party of Indians that had traveled eastward three or four weeks before were encountered and were productive of considerable consternation in the camp, some entertaining fears that they were Blackfeet.



This is a view of Waterton Lakes taken by the Royal Engineers in 1874, six years after McClellan first viewed the picturesque sight.

After prospecting at the head of Line River, finding the monument marking the British boundary three miles above the Pass, but no gold, the command travelled forty miles farther north along the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains to a stream one third larger than Sun River, called by the Indians the "River the Old Man Played On." This stream flows through the centre of the prairie and, having cut banks from eight to ten feet high, under which are concealed its groves of cottonwood, is invisible until the traveler is almost upon it.

Eight days prospecting upon this stream resulted in fatigue but a fortune for no one. In order to cross this river to the northern side it was found necessary to swim it. Accordingly men and animals plunged in, and reached the other side safely. While drying their supplies, after reaching the shore, Indians were seen in the distance. By firing their revolvers in the air, they signified their friendship for the whites and were permitted to come to their camp. They proved to be Kootenais and gave information that fifty-one lodges of their tribe would arrive the next day on their way home from a buffalo hunt. Proceeding still north, McClellan's party reached a stream about as large as the Blackfoot, which it was found impossible to prospect on account of the high water, passing

which, they reached, on July 4th, and at a distance of twenty miles.

Leaving their camp at Kootenai [Waterton] Lakes, explorations were made of the Porcupine Hills and the Old Man River. There, for the first time, gold was discovered, five or six colours to the pan being obtained from the top dirt, but nothing further down. Along the Porcupine Hills the party pursued its way, by a low pass some three miles in width, and arrived, on July 10th, at the Bow River. Said the *Montana Post*,

This stream is said to be as large as the Missouri at Fort Benton, and flows through one of the most beautiful valleys on the continent. The soil is excellent, producing timothy, clover, and blue grass in such luxuriance that the green blades reached to the backs of the horses as the expedition rode north. Although so far north, the season is earlier there than in this section, service [saskatoon] berries in abundance; and thousands of acres of strawberries being ripe as early as July 1st.

With all the streams well timbered, with the greatest production of grass to be found in the world, and with such a fruitful soil, who shall say that the Bow River country may not yet play an important part in the supply of Montana with agricultural productions?

From the main camp on Bow River, Captain McClellan, Nowlan, and Dillon went seventy miles into the mountains, discovered a lake twenty-five miles long and ten miles wide [*Lake Minnewanka] and went around it but found no gold. Returning to the rendezvous they found the camp again in confusion, some of the men wishing to turn back and others wishing to continue their journey to the Saskatchewan River. It was therefore decided to separate. There were objections raised on account of the danger from the Blackfoot, but these fears were laughed at by some who offered to bet that there was not a solitary red man within two hundred miles.

Hardly had the wager been laid, however, before hundreds of Indians made their appearance, to the discomfiture not only of the one offering the bet but to that of the entire camp. It was soon ascertained that the cause of the excitement was thirty-two lodges of Stoneys, all of a very amicable disposition, who exhibited their friendship by cordial invitations to the whites to remain and prospect their country, telling them that they would show them where they could find gold if they would do so. They also gave information that there were no provisions at Edmonton, at Hudson Bay Co's post one hundred and twenty miles further north, and all ideas which had been entertained of spending the winter there and prospecting the country were, therefore abandoned.

Only twelve days supplies being left to the expedition, it was now compelled to abandon further explorations and seek for white settlements. A party of eight started for the Saskatchewan, four of them to continue their journey to Red River and the other four to return to Benton this winter.

The balance of Capt. McClellan's party took up a direction of march for Sun River, keeping as a general thing, out in the prairies and from fifty to seventy-five miles east of the route taken when going up.

On the return trip they met John Rand's party of six men on their way to the country which they had just left. They were provided with wagons and cattle and

would probably spend the winter on Elk [Red Deer] River, forty miles north of Bow River. The members of Rand's party had all been in the section of which they were travelling before, and were confident of being successful in discovering gold diggings. Col. Spike, who had been of invaluable service to McClellan as an interpreter, turned back with Rand's party.

Capt. McClellan arrived in Helena on Saturday last and the whole party returned safe and sound.

According to the *Montana Post*, "They found some gold on a stream heading in the Porcupine Range, and in other places, but owing to high water... their prospecting was of a very superficial character. Capt. McClellan returned with as much confidence in the region as he had when starting."⁶

A word with regard to the geography of the country over which Capt. McClellan passed. And first, it is not perfectly described upon any map. Instead of being in the British Possessions, St. Mary's Lakes are thirty-five miles south of the line. Chief Mountain is between the Lakes and the line and about twenty miles from the latter. Milk River is the most northerly stream crossed which flows into the Missouri. Line River and the River the Old Man Played On are both tributaries of Belly River. Belly River and Bow River form a junction and flow into Lake Winnipeg and thence their waters find their way into Hudson Bay.

Along the eastern base of the main range, Capt. McClellan found a secondary double range of rocky and barren mountains, apparently higher than the Rocky Mountains themselves. The main range was heavily timbered throughout its whole extent.

Altogether the country is one which is deserving of more attention than has been bestowed upon it, and yet, one which cannot, at present, be thoroughly explored by private enterprise. We are glad to learn that Capt. McClellan proposes sending a report of his expedition to Governor Seymour of British Columbia, and that he has some grounds for hoping that the Governor will see fit to take measures for a more

thorough examination of the country than any that has yet been undertaken.

Capt. McClellan and the five mountaineers who proved most faithful to him during his expedition and whose names have been previously given, propose returning to the Bow River country this Fall and may probably pass the winter north of the British line.

McClellan's conclusion was that the region gave poor promise of finding gold. Ranges of limestone were met with on every hand, and numerous holes and shafts sunk to bed rock failed to reward the prospectors with a "color."

We cannot close this narrative without acknowledging the many obligations which we are held to Capt. McClellan for his kind rehearsal of every incident connected with his trip, there-by enabling us to give a report which our readers can rely upon as perfectly accurate and reliable.

(Note: Place-names marked with * and placed in brackets were kindly provided by Dr. Brian Reeves.)

Notes

- 1 *Helena Weekly Herald*, April 9 1868.
- 2 *Montana Post*, August 10, 1868. Unless otherwise stated, all direct quotes are from the August 10, 1868 issue of the *Montana Post*.
- 3 Besides McClellan, the party included Joe Healy, Hugh Monroe, Thomas McNalley, John Barlow, Francis Quinn, Z.P. Hammond, Allen Newhall, Thomas Trim, Major Dunn, Joseph Mereshow, William Teesdale, J.C. Marshall, Pat Kelly, Mike Dillon, Peter Coney, William Ross, James Abrams, J. Gillespie, E.M. Jones, J.D. McDonnell, Daniel Fitzpatrick, "Flying Dutchman," and interpreter Antoine Leading.
- 4 *Montana Post*, May 16, 1868.
- 5 *Helena Herald*, July 30, 1868.
- 6 *Montana Post*, August 3, 1868.
- 7 The estimates of distances are, in many cases, wildly inaccurate. For example, in this instance Waterton Lakes is located thirty-five into Montana, while in fact they are on the international boundary line.



Montana prospectors at work. Sketch from the *Anaconda Standard* in 1902.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TINCHEBRAY AGRICULTURAL COLONY



by

Henry Wostenberg

A unique agricultural colony was set up 130 kilometres southeast of Wetaskiwin on the Battle River in 1904 by three displaced priest-professors and three seminarians after their college and religious community was ordered closed by the anticlerical government of France.

Fathers Henri Voisin and Pierre Jules Marie Bazin of *L'Institut des Prêtres de Sainte Marie de Tinchebray* opened a Roman Catholic mission as a response to the forced closure of their institute and college in France. Bishop Emile Legal, of Diocese of St. Albert, suggested the establishment of the colony as a way to recoup their finances, teach theology and English, acculturate to Canada, and to begin the evangelization of the multiethnic Catholics flooding into the region south of the Battle River in Alberta.

Father Voisin reviewed these objectives in a mission status report delivered to his religious brothers at the 1907 General Chapter Meeting of Tinchebray Congregation held in France. He explained:

For the present a “*pied-à-terre*,” for the future, the perspective of an increase in the value of the land which wasn’t to be disregarded... While in this waiting situation, it gave time to those who were not yet priests to receive their final (Priesthood) Order and lastly all could learn English and the different customs of the country.¹

The objectives hinged on acquiring homesteads since their congregation in France left the new missionaries without any available funds for a Canadian mission. The only financial asset Fathers Voisin and Bazin, the mission pathfinders, had when they landed in Montreal on July 10, 1904, was a loan of \$2,400 from a creditor in France.²

The missionaries’ homesteads were acquired by making individual claims under the Dominions Lands Act. To acquire a freehold title to 160 acres of land required the payment of a ten dollar fee, three-year residence, breaking the land (usually 15 acres), and the erection of a domicile. The mission goals of seminary education and acculturation fitted nicely under the umbrella of homesteading. Little if any evangelization took place in the environs of the colony during the first five months of the mission in the Battle River region.

A meeting between the Bishop Emile Legal of the Diocese of St. Albert and the novice missionaries had been arranged for Winnipeg. Bishop Legal, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, was bound for Europe while the Tinchebray missionaries were en route to Calgary.³

On July 17th the priests and their future bishop met to discuss the goals and broad operational guidelines for the new mission, including the establishment of an agricultural colony along the south side of Battle River. The Bishop and the Tinchebray Fathers agreed in principle that the congregation would provide ministerial services in the Diocese of St. Albert.⁴ The exact location of the mission would be settled at a later date.

After the meeting, the pathfinders travelled on the Canadian Pacific Railway arriving in the Calgary station at 3 am on July 20, 1904. From there they continued their journey north on the Calgary and Edmonton Railway for the final leg of their 4300 kilometres journey from Montreal. Voisin granted himself poetic license when he described his future central Alberta vineyard: Said Voisin,

It (the rail line) is marked every 10 miles by a small town newly hatched, the oldest not yet two years old: they are called Red-Deer, Olds, Lacombe, and Wetaskiwin, all these places have friendliness and youthful exuberance in common. See these new

wooden houses with multicoloured tints that have not had time to fade...⁵

At Wetaskiwin they were lodged at Sacred Heart parish rectory. The booming town would be their initial Alberta base of operations. Father Voisin wrote down ten fundamental English words and their definitions on a piece of paper to help his non-English-speaking companion communicate and navigate the unfamiliar pioneer commerce. He would need help on both accounts. Father Voisin continued north to Edmonton and St. Albert where he met Rev. Father Hippolyte Leduc, the Diocese's vicar general and spent four days making his rounds at the Bishopric of St. Albert meeting the administrators of the Diocese and negotiating his Congregation's role in the mission field before returning to Wetaskiwin.

Voisin's short term plan was to organize for the arrival of the four remaining missionaries who were expected to reach Red Deer in about three weeks' time. Meanwhile the pathfinders' immediate task was to venture into the Battle River region to locate homesteads and make necessary preparations for the creation of their agricultural colony. When Voisin reunited with Bazin in Wetaskiwin he found that the priest had made a number of deals with local merchants. Voisin commented:

He had not wasted any time buying mower, rake, "waggin," harness and a team of horses. Like me, he did not suspect the legion of shysters and greedy people, who like birds of prey, they find the newly arrived settler, especially the unfortunate one who does not know English, and exploit his inexperience in the most shameless ways.⁶

Some of the people they encountered in Wetaskiwin appeared to be of a fine character. For example, "a stocky French-speaking man with thinning curly hair and a grizzled face" stored their supplies and wagon in his fenced-off yard and introduced the pair to a man knowledgeable of the area east of town. The middle-aged man, a Métis rancher (later identified as Rancher L.) from the Battle River region, was homeward bound and offered his service as a guide as far as his ranch. He claimed to be Catholic

Tinchebray Mission in 1904



This map shows the location of the Tinchebray mission.

and to have been a guide for the Oblate fathers in their missionary journeys between Calgary and Edmonton. He spoke of the Oblate missionaries as friends.⁷

The rancher's offer was accepted and two days later the trio started their journey. The priests' two horses included a young mare insufficiently broken and an old horse "recently rejuvenated by copious rations of oats."⁸ Voisin added, "Even at the start the young mare danced terribly and after a half-mile the old one stumbled at every step."

Their guide declared that they had been robbed! He volunteered to go back with Father Bazin to the horse trader in order to get a better deal. Voisin exclaimed, "An hour later, he brought us a beautiful horse in full force and that her very name seemed destined. Her name was a beautiful name: she was called *France!*"⁹ She proved to be a bit too forceful, later to be traded off to the rancher for more suitable livestock. This was the missionary's introduction to the challenges of animal husbandry and pioneering life that would last throughout

their agricultural colony experience and beyond. It was a useful apprenticeship for priests wanting to engage in pastoral ministries in rural Alberta.

The greenhorn settlers on the second day of their trek, July 25th, were also introduced to the common problem of straying of livestock – horses especially. After traveling in the hilly wooded parklands east of the Battle River's steel bridge for most of the afternoon, the rancher decided to camp near a lake in late evening. When the caravan stopped, the guide let his two small horses graze un-tethered saying that they were good little horses that never strayed.

Father Voisin observed, "The rules include exceptions and, one hour later, one of these model horses had taken to the fields beyond."¹⁰ The guide searched throughout the night while the two former French Army conscripts stood guard, rifle and shotgun at the ready against the serenading coyotes in the distance. The next morning the two-vehicle caravan continued eastward in hilly country moving in the direction of the ranch minus one horse.

The national and ethno-linguistic diversity on the frontier in the Battle River regions became apparent as they traveled deeper into the expansive parkland. During the twenty miles of their journey from Wetaskiwin they were greeted by a French-Canadian farmer in the morning whose last name was Jackson and who gave them much appreciated fresh water to quench their thirst.¹¹ Towards evening they crossed the lands of a Jew named Preston and a Swede, both of whom had recently taken up homesteads.

The next day around one o'clock they reached their intermediate destination, a ranch recessed near a lake in a treed area that included a cabin and corrals for cattle. The rancher carried out some of his own "horse trading" with his new companions after their overnight stay. The priests purchased a team of oxen at a good price, a supposed milk cow *Margo*, and her calf named *Phénomène*, for \$40.¹² They then traded their newly acquired horse *France* for an older, bigger, even-tempered mare more suitable for their isolated colony.

Additionally, since their wagon had been overloaded, forcing them earlier to leave the

mower's wheels in storage in Wetaskiwin along with continuous off loading and reloading supplies to get up hills along their route, they traded their new wagon for two of the rancher's older wagons. One wagon was in especially poor condition. They, nevertheless, agreed to the deal.

Finally, the rancher suggested that the priests hire one of his men, a Métis named Narcisse, to guide them the rest of the way to their destination at a rate of \$20 per month.¹³ Voisin agreed although he had doubts about his new hired hand because while the big man was good on horseback he was crippled and rather slow on the ground.

The party left the ranch at about two o'clock Thursday afternoon with Narcisse displaying his horsemanship when he drove the reluctant cattle from the ranch. The caravan continued eastward where a lone tent appeared on the distant horizon, that of a recently arrived Frenchman. In the evening at their stop, Father Voisin developed an additional agricultural skill that of milking the "dairy cow." He explained, "For the first time, I began to milk: I gathered only one or two cups of milk, and I attributed this meagre result to *Margot's* travels, as well as to the inexperience of my fingers."¹⁴

The journey to the east resumed on Friday after roughly waking up Narcisse. By this time their supplies were running low when Narcisse informed Voisin that there was a general store nearby in Red Willow. After one of the wagons was unloaded for unencumbered prairie travel, the priest and his guide were off to the village to restock. Voisin observed, "To say village, even hamlet, when speaking of Red Willow, is to use hyperbole. Four houses aligned on the same side of a future street, this was Red Willow."¹⁵

However this village did have a post office, a general store, and a stopping place - a virtual oasis after three days of wilderness. When the pair returned to the camp in the afternoon the voyage of discovery continued. Narcisse again demonstrated his horsemanship and skills as a wagoner when he took charge of the loaded wagons one by one to descend a steep hill, crossing a creek over a rickety bridge and then to ascend the escarpment to the prairie level on the other side of the

valley. By nightfall they made a camp near the edge of Big Knife Creek.

The next morning they continued their journey, meeting more people along the way. These encounters were unique examples of the growing diversity of the Battle River region at that time demonstrating the changing makeup of the district's population due to migration. While the party was eating lunch, a man on horseback greeted Narcisse. It was, Bruce, a German-Catholic rancher. The rider was overjoyed to discover that the travellers were priests. He galloped off to his ranch, some two miles away, returning within a half hour with bread cakes and butter for the newcomers.¹⁶

After a congenial visit, the priests promised the rancher to return then they resumed their journey. The challenging topography that they crossed had consisted of a grassy plateau dissected by creeks with cutbacks requiring crossing the same stream more than once. After crossing the Big Knife Creek for a second time, they approached a low earth and log dwelling of an elderly aboriginal couple. Voisin commented that, they "are two of the finest types of natives that I have seen. Ready and regular, aquiline nose, lively and intelligent eyes, they are well above the average of their countrymen, as much by their cleanliness, their love of work, and by the charm of their exterior."¹⁷ Narcisse conversed with the couple in his aboriginal language, likely Cree.¹⁸ A short time later after their visit, the convoy stopped at the ranch of Smitz, an Englishman married to an aboriginal woman who informed the voyageurs that *Abbé*¹⁹ Jean François Ferroux's encampment was only three miles away. Narcisse, on horseback, located the camp of the priest in short order.

The pathfinders had been on the trail for eight days since leaving Wetaskiwin when they pulled up at the camp of Ferroux. The missionary colonizer had recently arrived in the Battle River country along with some French Catholic colonists from his home region of Savoie in France. *Abbé* Jean I. Gaire had recruited both Ferroux and Voisin during his 1903-1904 European recruitment campaign.²⁰ Ferroux was later to have a conflicting experience with his followers as to what exactly was his role – was it ministering as a priest or being a "gentleman farmer"²¹ as some of his colonists were later



Four of the original missionaries at Tincchbray colony are seen in this 1909 postcard view. Right to left are: Fathers Leon Joseph Anciaux, Henri Voisin, Louis Stanislaus Jean Forget, unknown, and Paul Desire Renut.

to critically label him. He moved to British Columbia in 1908 after leasing out his land.²²

When Voisin first laid his eyes on Ferroux' camp he commented: "The installation was miserable: a tent, a hut of branches covered with hay. Compared to our destitution, it seemed to us the height of comfort. It has been 3 weeks since *Abbé* F. had pitched his tent a half-mile away from the 'Battle'..."²³ The Métis rancher who had guided Voisin and Bazin advised the priests to travel 25 to 30 miles beyond Ferroux' location, but Voisin wanted to be closer to Wetaskiwin. By this time wagon travel through the parkland had worn thin. Voisin noted, "*Abbé* F. dissuaded us; he advised us to stop closer to him, in the 'township' and kindly offered to show us around."²⁴ The *Abbé* suggested that having the French colonies close to each other was in their mutual interest, an idea that the newcomers readily accepted.

Voisin speculated that the Métis rancher had retreated to his secluded ranch location to get away from the surging wave of White settlement of the two preceding years and that was his motivation for suggesting that the Tincchbray homesteads should be located some thirty miles further east. Voisin asserted that the Métis rancher, "... clearly does not like the neighbours..."



This was a second building at the Tinchebray mission site. It was built by the priests, two stories high and with eight rooms. It was abandoned about 1912.

The next few days were spent searching for a good location to stake their homestead claims and invariably searching for their straying livestock. With Ferroux taking the lead, wearing a distinctive cocked hat tied on by a bright bandana,²⁶ they established a base camp about six miles further east. After three days of horseback searches, suitable homesteads were found near the Battle River. Voisin poetically declared:

We reached the edge of the Battle River; the grass was high and serene, the “Bluffs” and intermediate meadows; clearly drawn. It was the most beautiful park we had yet noticed, overlooking the wild valley silhouetted in the distance wavering and poetic. Holes dug by the shovel revealed a good quality black earth. Our choice is made.²⁷

Once the decision was made, the wagons, farming equipment, horses (except for another one that had ran off in the night), and oxen were moved to their claims the next day. Narcisse was sent in search of the fugitive horse. Their new encampment was established on a “well-rounded and relatively

high mound”²⁸ near a large slough. In the late afternoon *Abbé* Ferroux who had returned to his establishment the day before, came back to the Tinchebray homestead camp riding the fugitive horse he found grazing near his outpost to the west.

Later that same day on the grassy hill they had their first up close encounter with an all too common phenomenon that plagued settlers on the prairies – grass fires. These fires were easily started in high dry grass but difficult to stop. Father Bazin’s cooking fire got away from him quickly becoming a prairie fire. It took oxen and plough, and all hands four hours with luck (shift in the wind) to bring the fire under control. Voisin noted, “The mound was baptized at once. It always has been called since, by us at least, the burnt mound.”²⁹

Cutting hay was one of the first tasks that the aspiring farmers wanted done. Even though the wheels of the mower were still in Wetaskiwin, it could still function with some difficulty. The task was assigned to Narcisse who brought in his seventeen-year-old brother to help. Voisin was reluctant to hire the young man observing he was “lazy and nonchalant as his brother.”³⁰ Farm work proved to not be to the liking of the hired hands. In a few days, they asked to be paid out and left. Father Bazin decided to stay alone with the two horses at the homestead site, planning to mow more grass to put up hay for their livestock for winter. The mower’s teeth needed to be sharpened but they did not have a grindstone to accomplish the task. So, the day before Voisin was to leave for Red Deer, the priests trekked to a ranch of another Catholic Metis four miles away to borrow his grindstone. They were greeted warmly and given a meal. Voisin recalled,

The welcome was cordial, and the old women prepared us supper. For fifteen days, we had fasted on bread and water; we then ate to our fill. The meat was tough: it seemed to us all the same delicious. It was two hours later, when it was almost digested, that I realized it was Friday: I must admit that I had no remorse.³¹

The next day Voisin set off for Wetaskiwin by oxen team and wagon, reluctantly leaving Fr. Bazin alone, without hired hands, to

manage the homestead for the next two weeks. He did, however, have two horses to use for transportation and haying during the time of his solitude.

Father Voisin's three days solitary journey to Wetaskiwin proved to be more adventurous than he had originally anticipated. On the first day, while plodding westward on the trail towards the Ferroux colony, the oxen seemed to have developed minds of their own. They suddenly veered off the well-marked path, turning down a slope in a headlong dash towards the bluff at the bottom of the decline while ignoring the panicked commands of the driver. Voisin recalled, "I shouted 'Ha, Wo,' the magic words in normal times that guides the oxen to turn, hoping to bring them back into the trail."³² In the next moments the team, yoke, and wagon hitch were wedged in the grove of young poplar trees. With great effort, luck and in about one hour of valuable time the animals and wagon were extricated from their entanglement but not without a good scare. One of the angry oxen landed a glancing kick to the priest's leg, breaking a fountain pen in his trousers pocket. The thought of being stranded alone in the parkland seriously injured was alarming. Voisin pondered, "Is it as an omen of bad news for the rest of the course I asked myself."³³

After composing himself, Voisin continued his slow trek, even with an empty wagon, in the direction of Wetaskiwin. He retraced his first trip, hoping to be welcomed and receive frontier hospitality from his new acquaintances of the past few weeks. He reached the Ferroux colony around noon where he and others were entertained by two young Belgians would-be cowboys who had recently arrived at the colony. While the children were playing outside the tent, one of the young men demonstrated his dexterity with his firearm. Said Voisin, "Suddenly, a loud shot rang out and a bullet whistled past our ears, piercing the wall of the tent. It was a moment of stupor, dead silence. We expected to hear a scream outside. Fortunately, no one was hit."³⁴

Voisin resumed his outward-bound journey. That evening, Bruce, the German Catholic located further west of Ferroux alongside of Big Knife Creek, graciously gave the

travelling priest a place to sleep in his cramped cabin. The next morning, the cattleman provided a board to repair the priest's recently damaged wagon in order to continue his journey westward.³⁵

Voisin travelled for most of Sunday on well-marked trails in the direction of Buffalo Lake, but in the evening the sun went down causing the trail to fade away quickly into darkness. It was time to make camp in the tall grass along the trail. Voisin ate some stale bread with butter and a little jam given to him at the previous stops but there was nothing to wash it down with because the water nearby was unfit to drink. Also, he didn't dare start a fire in the tall maturing grass because a prairie fire was easy to start at this time of the year. He spent a miserable night listening to the bellowing cattle herds nearby; the last thing he wanted was for his headstrong oxen to break loose and join the range cattle. He was fed up with the oxen but on the other hand he did not want to be without transportation such a long way from help if he became stranded.

"He reached the Ferroux colony around noon where he and others were entertained by two young Belgian would-be cowboys."

On Monday morning, around four o'clock, the intrepid but shivering priest got up to resume his trek to Wetaskiwin, hoping to be able to make a stop at the ranch of the first guide. He was the man who traded the oxen and wagons for the horse named *France*. When Voisin reached the ranch, he made a proposition to his friend. Voisin recalled, "I was so tired of my steeds that I had a single thought; ask him to take the oxen back, or that he exchange them with horses. He coldly spurned my proposals and me summarily."³⁶ After the disappointing encounter, the missionary continued his journey toward Wetaskiwin by way of Meeting Creek valley. He had one more camping stop on the trail and then on August

15th he stayed with the pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Wetaskiwin.

Voisin went by rail to Red Deer the next day, to meet the four additional Tincchbray missionaries. *Abbé* Jean I. Gaire was in Red Deer at the time after returning from his European campaign along with about fifteen of his recently arrived French Catholic colonists at the shelter impatiently waiting to find homesteads.

Le Défenseur reported that 200 French emigrants who were travelling with the priest departed from the port of Le Havre in France on June 12, 1904 and expected to arrive in Red Deer in August.³⁷ The new Tincchbray immigrant missionaries included an ordained priest, Father Jean-Marie Chauvin (PSM) and three seminarians – Louis Stanislaus Jean Forget (PSM), Leon Joseph Anciaux (PSM), and Paul Desire Renut (PSM). Their first order of business was to file claims to homesteads at the Red Deer Land Office in order to establish their first mission station.

Father Voisin wrote to Bishop Legal the next day using stationery of the Alberta Hotel of Red Deer dated 18 August 1904, informing him of their homestead claims, “I intended to take only the four homesteads. Finally, we decided to extend it to six...”³⁸ They also prudently purchased a large round tent along with several blanket bundles from the immigration office for ten dollars.³⁹ Voisin added, “There was also in town, held up in room by a slight accident, another French priest (*Abbé* A. Gendre) visiting with his family, with whom later we were to come better acquainted.”⁴⁰ Gaire’s recruitment trip of 1903-1904 was beginning to bring an influx of French immigrants to central Alberta.

Father Gaire gave a farewell talk to fledgling missionaries at the Red Deer rail station. Gaire and his French Catholic colonists gave the missionaries a rousing send-off, chanting, “Go forth, you are heroes!”⁴¹ The men clambered aboard a flatbed rail wagon as the train lurched to start the one hundred kilometres to Wetaskiwin. Sacred Heart Church served as their dorm that night. The next morning, the novice missionaries still feeling the lingering euphoria of the day before, began their eastward trek from

Wetaskiwin in the direction of their spartan mission station that awaited them. Father Voisin vividly detailed the groups’ journey across the parklands of central Alberta in a written speech read for him at the 1908 alumni meeting of St. Mary’s College in France. He wrote:

In late August 1904, you would have seen a team of two oxen towing the load slowly, in a country without roads, high and heavy cargo crowned by five cassocks. It was pitiful procession of the exiled Fathers of Tincchbray advancing on the lone prairie. You might have seen in turn the rolling weight sink into a quagmire, stop for hours in a too steep climb, wandering lost in vague circuits. It lasted six days.⁴²

The expedition from Wetaskiwin to the homestead site took a total six days; without a local guide they made a number of wrong turns. After crossing the Battle River over a wooden bridge, the oxen could not muster the strength to ascend the hill on the other side whereupon Louis Forget was sent ahead to find help. He came back five hours later with a big German farmer with a team of horses that made quick work rectifying the stubborn situation. The farmer, observing frontier hospitality, gave the travellers a meal and a place to sleep (his granary).

The next day Voisin bargained with the same farmer for one of the two horses that had pulled them up the hill. She was a big beautiful light bay mare named *Lisette*.⁴³ The purchase was necessary because the oxen had refused to budge after reaching the trail that morning. After several more days of tribulation with little progress, Voisin discouragingly admitted that, it had taken “two and a half days to cover the same road that his Metis guide had achieved in three-quarters of a day...”⁴⁴

The fourth day saw the entourage of two oxen towing the heavily-loaded wagon with a horse attached at the back as they entered the desolate Meeting Creek valley. It would take more than a day to traverse the uninhabited stretch with a dry creek bed and the occasional muddy hole of stagnant water. In this time, the oxen were named and taught to respond to their names by the sting of the stick. “*Bringe*” was a big brown good-natured ox while “*Caillot*” was a smaller

white spotted animal and not so good-natured. Lisette, the most recent horse added to the missionaries' menagerie, was a buckner as most of the travelling contingent soon discovered. Father Forget who had served as a dragoon during his compulsory military service in France mounted the horse after Father Voisin had been thrown flat on his back, thus ending his brief ride. Forget stayed on during a rough ride but prudently slipped down off the spirited horse after a few exciting minutes. Father Jean-Marie Chauvin, who suffered from a chronic illness, proved to be the best cowboy of the day.⁴⁵ The camping was better than the July trip out because of the recent blanket bundles and tent purchases in Red Deer.

The missionaries finally reached *Abbé Ferroux*' camp after a few more lessons in frontier education and six days of travel. Ferroux took Voisin aside and informed him that, "Father Bazin is alone: horses left, everything has escaped; I fear he has nothing left to eat."⁴⁶ Father Bazin had volunteered to stay behind with the two horses to cut hay, as the horses could pull the mower more efficiently than the oxen. Father Bazin had let the horses graze unencumbered after the hobbled chargers had briefly gotten entangled in the camp's fencing. For two days, the unshackled horses had grazed contently around the camp but on the third day they took off right under the nose of Father Bazin who instinctively charged after the escaping horses in hot pursuit. All three disappeared into a nearby grove of poplar trees and soon the animals were out of sight - gone! The two straying horses were not recovered for several months.⁴⁷

On the 15th of August, Bazin walked seven miles to the Ferroux camp but he was reluctant to impose himself on the dwindling resources of the equally impoverished settlers and so he returned to the Tinchébray camp. On the night of August 24th, the six missionaries were finally reunited and the business of building a more permanent shelter began in earnest.

Building their first solid log cabin took the newcomers late into the fall before it was completed. They had only one pair of gloves among them for the work. The building site was near a grove of tall poplar trees located in a small valley with steep slopes. They



This is a modern view of the "burnt mound" that marked the original Tinchébray mission site.

learned forestry through the process of trial and error and with the assistance of some Métis from the nearby hamlet of Content, who had long standing frontier skills.⁴⁸

Father Voisin described their first halting steps as lumberjacks. He declared, "We loaded on our shoulders the heavy timber, and stumbling, often folding under the burden... The outcome of this afternoon: sixteen small trunks felled and dragged out, bruised shoulders, aching limbs (with our) enthusiasm fully retracted."⁴⁹ In the following days the foresters cleared pathways beforehand then, with the oxen pulling chains attached to the trunks, achieved much better results than with human muscle power alone.

Very late in the fall the cabin took shape. Dressed logs ranging from thirty to forty centimetres in diameter with properly notched ends were arranged in a rectangle for wall construction. The gaps between the logs were chinked and daubed with clay while the floor was levelled and tamped down. The gabled roof frame was overlaid with "...branches, hay; then was covered with sod cut with a plough. Everything is coated with twenty centimetres of sand and you have a waterproof roof in theory."⁵⁰ By early November their temporary shelter was replaced by the log cabin 12 feet by 14 feet with a packed earthen floor.⁵¹ Luxury! The cabin was later converted into a chapel after a two-storey building was erected.

The clergymen at Tinchébray Colony relied on staple foods such as flour, canned goods,

and potatoes brought in from Wetaskiwin but there was plenty of small wild game in the surrounding environs that provided welcome variation to their staple diet. Father Bazin, in a letter to his sister in France, declared that in his wide-open prairie backyard there were chickens (prairie), ducks, rabbits, and geese. Bazin had earned the reputation of boldly plunging into activities and in this case, it was the icy cold water of the surrounding sloughs in pursuit of downed waterfowl. He described himself in one of his hunting adventures proudly declaring: "At the stroke five of o'clock, we're going with my gun, and suddenly I shot down three, four and even six ducks. Two operations like this, and we go quite embarrassed of the booty. My belt is surrounded by a string of bloody victims."⁵²

"The clergymen at Tinchébray colony relied on staple foods such as flour, canned goods, and potatoes brought in from Wetaskiwin."

The other water animal that sparked Bazin's interest was the muskrat because of its utilitarian fur: it became a victim of his military sharpshooting skills. Bazin wrote, "There are quantities of these gentle animals in the area. One sends a rifle bullet on the little head as it just emerges from the water and it's done. The fur is nice and warm." Bazin, praised Father Anciaux' pelting skills observing, "Our artist has prepared a cozy fur cap of unique style, and no doubt this is the beginning of a new House of Revellon!"⁵³

The next major step in the development of the Tinchébray Mission began in late October when Fathers Voisin and Bazin traveled to Red Deer in November to set up the mission's foundation. Their original plan to make Red Deer the headquarters of the mission was changed when they met surprising resistance from some of the town's French Canadians who had a different priest in mind. After the meeting, Voisin decided to establish his headquarters in Innisfail — a town that had few Roman Catholics at the time — French or otherwise.⁵⁴

Father Bazin then returned to the colony to supervise its operation, teach the seminarians theology, and to initiate steps to evangelize Catholics in the surrounding area. Father Chauvin joined Voisin in the new headquarters as his assistant. All four of the remaining colonists were occupied with work to survive and to fulfill the three-year residency requirement necessary to take legal possession of their concessions. Much of the very heavy work of the homesteading fell onto the shoulders of Louis Forget who had the physical size and strength required. He came from a Norman peasant background so farm work was not foreign to him.⁵⁵

While the Tinchébray agricultural colony and homesteading were not the intended focus of the Tinchébray mission, they did serve as a basic training ground and sweat equity investment for the overall mission enterprise. The agricultural colony was simply a means to an end. Their purpose was not to become farmers. Voisin unequivocally stated, "From the first moment, my direct view was the one that I have never ceased to have; the ministry of the work of saving souls, was the only and unique goal."⁵⁶ The 1907 Chapter report justified the agricultural work by citing its benefits, optimistically, in dollars and cents. It reported:

Already now we are going to start to collect the benefits of the homesteads. Fathers Forget and Remit will have the title of their property before January. Actual value of a homestead is \$2400 and Fr. Bazin will have his next January 1908, Fr. Anciaux in August 1908 and finally when Fr. Roncy will have his in May 1909 we will have a value of \$12,000.⁵⁷

The original intention of the Mission, that of saving souls, became more in focus by the end of 1905. Fathers Anciaux and Renut, after completing their theological studies under the tutorship of Father Bazin, were ordained at St. Albert by Bishop Legal on November 12, 1905.⁵⁸ Father Forget's ordination was delayed until April 5, 1908, because of a wagon accident.⁵⁹ Voisin had informed the Bishop of Forget's accident in a letter dated May 25, 1905, writing, "The wheel of the wagon passed over the leg of Father Bazin himself, and Fr. Forget, one of the ordination candidates, projected violently, was wounded hi the neck."⁶⁰

The two newly ordained priests, along with Father Bazin, combined six months yearly residency requirement on the homestead along with their developing ministries to Catholics in central Alberta. Father Theodore Roncy (PSM) became the first additional recruit to the Alberta mission, relieving Bazin of his duties at the colony in 1906. Roncy was in charge of the clerics at the colony from 1906 to 1907.⁶¹

As early as 1905, Father Bazin began to expand his missionary work to nearby communities including Halkirk, Stettler, and to the Battle River Metis. Bazin became Stettler's first resident priest serving the mission until 1908.⁶² Fathers Anciaux and Renut began their ministries after their ordinations as assistant priests while still meeting the six-month homestead residency requirements. Father Anciaux assisted Voisin in the Innisfail-Red Deer district while Renut assisted Bazin. Father Roncy, in addition to duties at the colony, provided a ministry east of Stettler to the Saskatchewan border.⁶³ Stettler had become the railhead of a spur line expanding from Lacombe in 1905 where it was stalled for several years. The influx of multiethnic settlers, Roman Catholics among them, increased the demand for the services of priests that the Tinchbray Fathers struggled to meet.

The decision to embark on a distant mission to the central Alberta frontier in 1904 had been courageous and daunting. They, like most pioneers of the day, faced adjustments to change, fatigue, isolation, privation, climate, weather, and accidents, but for them facing these daunting challenges were not for personal economic gain. Their motivation was inspired by religious faith and a desire to assist their Catholics to gain salvation.

They had endured long travel by sea and rail just to reach their new mission field. Their business and personal interaction in Wetaskiwin and on the trail required taking chances and making adjustments in a new social and physical environment. Using horses, oxen, and wagons for transportation between their colony and Wetaskiwin was at times dangerous even for long-time residents let alone for one-time teachers, unskilled in the practical arts of the frontier. The Catholic Métis from south of the Battle River provided a vital service to these missionaries, making

it possible for the novices to reach their destination and to build their first cabin in order to survive their first winter. Facing the unknown continued to be a fact of the missionaries' lives throughout most of their residence in rural Alberta.

The author, Henry Wostenberg, is a retired Red Deer Catholic School social studies teacher. He is currently revising a manuscript draft on the Tinchbray Mission that was submitted to the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation in return for a research grant on the subject.

Notes

- 1 Red Deer & District Archives (RDDA), Reverend Fathers of Saint Mary of Tinchbray Collection (MG 462), Voisin, Henri, *Report on the Works of the Fathers of Tinchbray*, Trans by Jane Doe, (Glenbow M 8145 F 2, n.p.1907): 5. (Hereafter: Voisin, *Chapter Report of 1907*).
- 2 *Ibid.* 1.
- 3 Henri Voisin, "Debuts des Pretres de Sainte Marie de Tinchbray du Canada", *Bulletin de N-D De La Bonne Mart: Organe de Missions des Pretres de Ste-Marie de Tinchbray au Canada: Mission Du Canada, Année No.8 (sept. -oct. 1909)*: 7. (Hereafter: *Bulletin de N-D*.)
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.* 8.
- 6 Voisin, "Debuts...", *Bulletin de N-D, Année, No. 10 (jan. -fevr. 1910)*: 9.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.* 10.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Voisin, "Debuts ...", *Bulletin de N-D, No.11 (mars - avril 1910)*: 10.
- 12 *Ibid.* 10.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.* 13.
- 15 Voisin, "Debuts...", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No. 13 (juillet - aout 1910)*: 13-15.
- 16 *Ibid.* 15.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 The title *Abbé* refers to a secular priest whereas *Père* or Father is the title given to professed members of a French religious congregation.
- 20 "Etablissement de nos Emigrants de l' année 1904," *Le Défenseur: Catholique & French Organe de œuvre de la colonisation Catholique au Canada, 3me Seris, No 7, (janv. fevr. - mars, 1905)*: 17. (Hereafter *Le Défenseur*)
- 21 Donatien Frémont, *Les François dans l'ouest canadien, Saint-Boniface: Les Editions du Blés*, 1980. 132.
- 22 *Golden Echoes: History of Galahad & District*, Intercollegiate Press of Canada, 1980. 372.
- 23 Voisin, "Debut...", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No. 13 (juillet-aout, 1910)*: 15.
- 24 Voisin, "Debut...", *Bulletin de N.D. Année No. 15 (dec.- nov. 1910)*.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Ibid.* 11.
- 27 *Ibid.* 12.
- 28 *Ibid.* 12.
- 29 *Ibid.* 13.
- 30 Voisin, Henri, "Suite de L'expédition des Peres Voisin et Bazin a la Rivière Bataille en vue de L 'installation d'une colonie française." *Bulletin de N-D, Année No. 17 (mars - avril 1911)*: 13.
- 31 *Ibid.* 15.
- 32 *Ibid.* 16.
- 33 *Ibid.*

- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *Ibid.* 17.
- 37 Jean Gaire, "A la veille du départ" *Le Défenseur: Catholique & French Organe de l'œuvre de la colonisation Catholique au Canada*, 3^{me} Sire, No 5 (juillet, aout, septembre, 1904) : 2-4.
- 38 ARCAE, Red Deer File (7.3.122), Voisin to Legal, 18 Aug 1904.
- 39 Voisin, "En route vers la nouvelle paroisse de Tinchebray", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No 21* (nov. - dec. 1911) : 14.
- 40 Voisin, "Arrivée de quatre nouveaux (1904) Peres au Canada", *Bulletin de ND-, Année No. 19* (mai - juin 1911): 11-17.
- 41 Voisin, "Arrivée... ", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No 19* (mai-juin 1911): 12.
- 42 Voisin, "Discours du R P. Voisin", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No. 2* (Sept-Oct 1908): 26.
- 43 Voisin, "Arrivée... ", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No 19* (mai - juin 1911): 12.
- 44 Voisin, "En route vers la nouvelle paroisse de Tinchebray", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No 21* (nov. - dec. 1911) : 13.
- 45 *Ibid.* 14.
- 46 *Ibid.* 15.
- 47 Voisin, "Fondation d'une Mission et d'une catholique franc, aise a La Riviere Bataille en 1904", *Bulletin de N-D, Année No. 32* (juillet - aout 1913) : 10.
- 48 La Survivance, "Les Pretres de Sainte-Marie dans Alberta. Une belle page de notre histoire religieuse (1904-1921)", 5 mars 1952, 2.
- 49 Voisin, "Fondation...", *Annee No 34* (janv. -fevr. 1914) : 13.
- 50 *Ibid.* 14.
- 51 Voisin, La Survivance, "Les Pretres de Sainte-Marie dans Alberta: Une belle page de notre histoire religieuse (1904-1921)", 5 mars 1952, 2.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 *Ibid.* 18.
- 54 Voisin, *Chapter Report of 1907*. 4.
- 55 *Ibid.* 3.
- 56 *Ibid.* 2.
- 57 *Ibid.* 10.
- 58 ARCAE, Priests' Biographies.
- 59 ARCAE 7.3.74, Voisin (Innisfail) to Legal (St. Albert), 25 mai 1905.
- 60 ARCAE, Priests' biographies
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Ibid.*

REGULATIONS AGAINST FORTUNE TELLERS

Edmonton - The police commissioners have asked the city commissioners for action by way of strengthening the regulations to govern the operations of gypsy fortune tellers. With the police commission behind them, the city commissioners have gone ahead and prepared amendments to the license bylaw which were presented to the city council Thursday afternoon at its adjourned meeting and adopted. The difficulty all along has been that the city has no legislative power and cannot abolish or prohibit by regulation. However, it is believed the additions to the license bylaw will be within the powers of the city council and will have the effect desired.

In the first place it is decided to make the practices of palmistry or phrenology a business where a certificate of character is required from the chief of police before a license is granted. It is provided also that the applicant will have to find a bond of \$500 and two other securities of \$500 each. The premises where the business will be carried on must also be designated and the license will apply to only those particular premises. It is decided to increase the license fee for palmistry and phrenology from \$50 to \$200, and also to insert a number of general rules, such as that the applicant must satisfy the license inspector that he or she is qualified to carry on the business, and also two certificates of moral character must be furnished from citizens of repute. Provisions are included to prohibit canvassing and also to insist that the scale of charges must be exhibited in as prominent place. Hypnotists were also included in the amendments in the bylaw.

Edmonton Bulletin, September 13, 1918.

TO THE PEACE RIVER AREA BY AUTO

Introduction

This article first appeared in 1913 when automobile travel had become the rage. The autoist, R.J. Ferguson, provided a reporter with details of his historic trek to the Peace River area.

To travel northward more than five hundred miles above Edmonton is to strike into that part of Canada wherein lingers something of the romance of pioneering. Across the valley of the Peace River and to the north the wilds are making a stubborn but continual retreat before, the march of civilization, led by the ploughshare and the reaper. To attempt to penetrate far into this country in an automobile was to set out on a hazardous journey, the ultimate end of which was by no means easy to foresee. It was, however, bound to be a trip full of interest and one that would have a rich store of experiences not only as to the nature of the country through which the route lay, but also by reason of the different types of inhabitants to be met.

It was largely this that influenced R. J. Ferguson, of Calgary, when in the early fall of last year he decided to venture the trip. Friends were doubtful as to the wisdom of making the attempt when first spoken to on the matter, but when they understood Mr. Ferguson was to be accompanied only by his wife and a small dog, doubt gave way for certainty, and the idea was heartily condemned.

It was a pioneer trip in the fullest sense of the word. Mr. Ferguson's McLaughlin-Buick was to be the first car venturing into those scarcely mapped wilds. The road, or the trail, or whatever the half-marked route pleased to call itself, was fairly easy to find, but to drive over it was by long odds another matter. For almost three-quarters the way it was but a blazed path through the wilderness, and the fact that Mr. Ferguson successfully covered it twice is a matter for the heartiest congratulation to the man and the car he drove.

From Calgary to Edmonton was the easy part of the trip. It is a journey that is frequently being made by western motorists. Beyond Edmonton the real work began. Up through this part of the country the settler is rapidly taking up the land. The road passes settlement after settlement of pioneers who are working their acres and drawing from them a comfortable, happy living. The majority of these are Galicians, a people well suited to the kind of life they are here called upon to lead. They have brought with them much of the picturesqueness of their European home, and the mark they will leave upon Canadian citizenship of future ages will undoubtedly tend to raising the average of racial efficiency.

The road over this stretch of the journey varied in character. At no time of the year is it better than fairly good. For some years now a stage coach has made regular trips north to Athabasca Landing, making the journey in about three days. While the motor car with its three occupants made

View of Athabasca Landing, the first major stop for the autoists on the trip to the Peace River area. The village is seen here in 1911.



the trip in less time than this, the travelling was not fast owing to the roughness of the road. They ran through thickly timbered and rolling country with here and there some exceedingly high hills. The Landing, famous as the gateway of the north land so long owned and ruled by the Hudson's Bay Company, lies beneath these hills. At the first glimpse it lies far below, a little village on the bank of the Athabasca, and yet the most important trading points in all the new north.

"The road, or the trail, or whatever the half-marked route pleased to call itself, was fairly easy to find but to drive over it was by long odds another matter."

Civilization in the form of a steam boat has already reached this far. It regularly runs up the Athabasca to Mirror Landing. Roads do not here exist, and Mr. Ferguson loaded his car and party aboard and journeyed the eighty miles in this way. The scenery along the river bank, as throughout the trip, was well worth the having come. The character of the country continues very rolling, and on either side of the river it is thickly timbered with poplar, small fir, and pine.

Mirror Landing is at the mouth of the Slave River where it runs into the Athabasca and here the car was taken from the boat in order to make a sixteen-mile portage. Here was a piece of traveling that put the endurance of all concerned to the test. People living there said the car would never cover the distance, as the trail was little else than swamps, and was only wide enough for a wagon, and not a particularly large wagon at that. Mr. Ferguson had expected that sort of thing, and part of his several hundred pounds of equipment was composed of block and tackle and a stout axe. By a judicious, and at times vigorous, use of these, the sixteen miles was made in one hour and twenty minutes, whereat those who heard of it wondered greatly.

This brought the party to Salteaux Landing where another boat was boarded for a forty

mile trip up the Slave River and to the mouth of entrance to Lesser Slave Lake. Seventy-five miles further the boat carried them to the extreme end of the lake. Lesser Slave Lake is long and very narrow. On this occasion a heavy wind was blowing, and the boat had to take shelter in the lee of an island. The island bears no name, and will not be found on any map, yet it is as interesting a place as one would find in that country. It comprises about four hundred acres of land, and is inhabited by one man and his wife, who, year after year, have lived there and, as far as one can make out, have greatly enjoyed their lives.

The character of its soil and that of the surrounding country may be gathered from the fact that it has one field of about a hundred and fifty acres which on the occasion of this visit, bore a crop of hay standing six feet high. While the steamer waited the dropping of the wind, the passengers landed to call at the lonely house, being received with the hospitality one might expect where visitors are so few and far between. The wonder of the island was a vegetable garden in which were to be found every vegetable that is grown in Ontario. Raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, saskatoons, and cranberries grew in abundance. It was hard to understand what this family of two could possibly do with the tremendous yield the garden.

About five o'clock that afternoon, the wind went down, and after travelling all night the steamer arrived early at Grouard. While an occasional motor car may have been as far north as Athabasca Landing, no such thing had ever been seen at Grouard and by far the greater number of the inhabitants had never set eyes upon any such curious vehicle. Some had seen photographs, and their curiosity was all the more keen. Interest became general the moment the car came into sight of this town, and many were the prophesies as to how it would fail to travel over such roads as that country possessed.

Grouard is by no means a large town; it is not even a large village. It has but one street, and that is as innocent of paving as any bush trail in the country. It is sandy, and the good citizens were of one opinion that the car would not, could not plough through to the first house. The entire population turned out

to see what would happen, and disappointment was general when the little run into town was made without difficulty.

While at Grouard, Mr. Ferguson heard that a fall fair was in progress at High Prairie, twenty-two miles to the southeast. This was an attraction too great to be missed, and the trip was made in one hour and forty minutes over a trail that in some places was so rough and narrow as to be almost impassable. The settlers for many miles round were gathered at High Prairie; and the wonder and delight displayed at the advent of the car left little interest for the exhibits displayed. These were particularly interesting to the travelers, the quality of grains and the vegetables shown being such as to open their eyes to the unexcelled fertility of the country.

Next day the start for the Peace River Crossing was made. Up to this point Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson had been able to spend the nights under the friendly roofs of little hotels or friendly farm houses, but henceforth it was to be a camping trip. This necessitated the packing into the automobile six hundred and sixty pounds of gasoline and the camping outfit. This tremendous quantity of gasoline was necessary because enough had to be carried to run the car the rest of the journey and back to Grouard. Mr. Ferguson decided to make Dunvegan, on the Peace River, his headquarters and to pack the gasoline that far.

The journey on from Grouard over a trail that surely has no equal for down-right difficulty the country over. Some ten miles of it has a series of ugly holes, through which the car had to force its way, and time after time the adventurous driver had to climb out and cut away a stump. Further on, a piece of better road was met with. Here the government had a gang of men at work cleaning up the path. For this evidence of civilization, Mr. Ferguson was grateful, and good time was made over the strip that had been attended to.

A little further on the car ran into a district through which a forest fire was then raging. The trees on either side of the road had been burned. Many had fallen across the track, and here and there bridges over creeks had entirely disappeared, and the block and tackle and a vast amount of care had to be



exercised before the party could advance. At this point the smoke from the fire raging not far away that Mr. Ferguson could see only a few yards ahead. Despite continual danger from the condition of the road, to say nothing of the presence of fire and a large supply of gasoline, Peace River Crossing was finally made, and from there on to Dunvegan the trail was as good as any such could possibly be. A few days' stay was made at Dunvegan, and it was decided to push on to Grand Prairie.

Here another fall fair was in progress; as before, the automobile was the centre of attraction. The welcome extended it was something in the nature of a royal triumph, as it was the first automobile that had ever come out of Grouard. Half the inhabitants had no idea what manner of thing it was that had thus come amongst them. One man in a state of excitement came galloping into town to tell of some strange thing that had passed his farm. It had wheels, but no horses. He had gone to the barn to get a saddle horse to follow it, but by the time he got out it was gone and he had no chance to see what it was.

The wonder of the Indians and half-breeds when the car passed them on the road was something worth going far to see. Invariably they ran into their tepees, and could be seen peeping out until the car had safely passed,

This is the type of McLaughlin-Buick used by the Fergusons for their northern trek.

after which they came to the road to watch it out of sight.

The return trip was as interesting as the journey out had been. Everywhere the car went the same interest was created. It was safely made, and throughout the whole holiday the car met with no mishap. The load was an exceedingly heavy one, and in one of the particularly bad pieces of road the right hand frame was broken. Mr. Ferguson managed to block it up, however, and travelled many hundred miles further without the least difficulty. Other than this the car made the whole trip without so much as a punctured tire.

Mr. Ferguson is firmly of the opinion that no better holiday could have been spent in this way. Both he and Mrs. Ferguson, to say nothing of the dog, have had an experience or a series of experiences that too seldom fall to the lot of present-day Canadians. It is likely that in future motor touring over the lesser parts of this country will be a popular form of holiday-making only in that day it may be hard to find districts in which the automobile is still a novelty as it was in the neighbourhood of Grande Prairie.

Note: This article appeared in the *Calgary Herald*, April 12, 1913.

NORTHERN OIL DISCOVERIES

The report of H.G. McConnell, appearing in the report of the geological survey branch of the department of the interior contains the following:

“Favorable indications of the presence of oil are afforded by the existence of several natural gas springs in the valley of the Athabasca above Boiler Rapid. One of these occurs at the mouth of Little Buffalo River and is twenty miles distant in a straight line from the outcrop of the tar-sands. The gas here forces its way from the sands up through a covering of 250 feet of Benton shales and issues from the surface in numerous small jets distributed over an area fifty feet or more in diameter. Some of the jets when lighted burn steadily until extinguished by heavy rains or strong wind, and afford sufficient heat to cook a camp meal. A second spring was noticed thirteen miles below the mouth of Pelican River, or forty miles in a straight line from the outcrop of the tar-sands at Boiler Rapid. The volume of gas escaping here is less than at the mouth of Little Buffalo River, and in order to reach the surface it is obliged to penetrate 570 feet of shales and sand. Escaping jets of gas were also noticed at several points further up the river, but these were mostly small and may possibly be due to decaying vegetable matter.

“The question of contiguity of the tar-sands, and their petroliferous character under cover, can only be settled in a decided manner by boring, and it is highly desirable that drilling operations should be undertaken for this purpose. The indications seem amply sufficient to warrant the small expenditures involved, and the advantages which would accrue from a successful issue of the search to this portion of the North-West are almost incalculable. The southern limit of the field cannot, without present knowledge or without boring, be deduced; it may possibly extend to the Saskatchewan or beyond, as even so far as Manitoba the rocks are more or less petroliferous.

“Two bore holes, one at the mouth of Lac la Biche River, and the other at the mouth of the Pelican, would add largely to our knowledge of the underground geology of this region, and would either settle positively the question as to the presence or absence of petroleum in paying quantities, or at least afford valuable data for future action. At the mouth of the Pelican River, a bore hole, in order to reach the tar-sands, would require to be sent 700 feet, and at the mouth of Lac la Biche River about 1,200 feet. The former locality is 50 miles distant in a straight line from the outcrop of tar-sand at Boiler Rapid. The latter is 106 miles distant from the same point, and is only 110 miles from Edmonton.”

Edmonton Bulletin, May 9, 1891.

THE STATE OF THE WEST

PREDICTIONS OF 1874



by
Charles N. Bell

The following letter was submitted to Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris, Winnipeg, on March 23rd, 1874. In it, Charles Bell describes the situation in the West months before the arrival of the North-West Mounted Police and offers suggestions as to how to deal with the extinction of the buffalo and its effect on the western tribes. Notes and comments have been added to the essay.

Charles Napier Bell arrived in the West with the Red River Expedition of 1870 and was a free trader in the Saskatchewan country in 1872 and 1873. He then settled in Winnipeg where he became secretary of the Winnipeg Board of Trade and later was secretary of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. Bell took an active interest in the affairs of the West and its history and later became president of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. Here are his views, observations, and opinions on the state of the West in 1874.

What is to be done with our Western Plain Indians? In 4 or 5 years there will not be a Buffalo in Dominion Territory.¹ The Plain Indians live on the Buffalo & on them alone. In the Western country the game is being killed out much faster than is generally supposed, and the hunters are increasing in number every year; they are coming into the "Hunting Ground" from all quarters.

French & English Half Breeds from Manitoba who have located about Carlton & the Qu'Appelle Lakes, American outlaws from the Missouri now forming settlements & building forts on the Bow and Belly rivers, these added to the former hunters, viz, the Sioux, Assiniboine, Crees, Blackfeet & the Half Breeds from Victoria, Edmonton & Big Lake [St. Albert], have the Buffalo hemmed in on all sides to a very small tract of country. On the south are the Americans, on the East the Sioux, Assiniboines, Crees & the Half Breeds from the Qu'Appelle Lakes & Ft. Carlton; on the North the Wood & Plain Crees & the Half Breeds from Fort Pitt, Saddle lake, White Fish Lake, Victoria, Edmonton & Big Lake; on the West rises the Rocky Mountains & from them come several small tribes of Indians.

By this it may be seen that the Buffalo ranges only in the Blackfoot and a part of the Cree countries. It is generally understood at the

present time that to obtain a successful hunt, the Blackfoot country will have to be entered.

A great many of the French half Breeds, who a short time ago lived at Big Lake, 9 miles north of Edmonton, have moved south to Bull's Lake [Buffalo Lake] to keep near the Buffalo, and have there built houses & formed settlements.² This is in the Blackfoot country. Being confined to the above Territory, the Buffalo are kept continually on the move by the hosts of hunting parties which come from all directions. The Crees finding but little game in their own country, made a Treaty of Peace with the Blackfeet³ and with the expectation of a treaty with the Dominion Govt.,⁴ led to the perfect peace which has been kept by these two tribes between each other for the last three years. A year ago, I had Crees & Blackfeet sleeping with me in the same lodge, good friends.

The Blackfeet having trouble on the South with the Americans,⁵ and the Crees having the same with the half Breeds on the North and East,⁶ the above Treaty of Peace has been threatened, but should a rupture occur (as it may any day from a case of horse stealing, &c.) what are the Crees to do for food? They cannot go to the Blackfoot Territory to hunt, and there is little or no game in their own! They might fight with the Blackfeet for a hunting ground, or they

might plunder the settlements and Hudson's Bay Co.'s forts on the North Saskatchewan.

The Americans on the Bow and Belly Rivers are paying very high prices in whiskey, poison, &c. &c. for all kinds of fur, but particularly for Buffalo robes, and it is shown that the Indians are killing a great many Buffalo for their hides alone.⁷

"The Americans on the Bow and Belly Rivers are paying very high prices in whiskey, poison, &c. for all kinds of fur, but particularly for Buffalo robes."

When it is remembered that the Plain Indians live on the Buffalo alone, it may be seen at a glance where this slaughtering will end. Which is to come first, Reservation or Extermination? The latter will soon come if means are not taken *at once* to render the Indian independent of the chase for his living; it will be next to impossible to make such warlike tribes as the Blackfeet & Crees settle down at once on reserves without a struggle, and if they once resisted, it would end in extermination. If the different countries of the tribes are formed into large temporary reservations,⁸ taking in all the hunting grounds as they are at present, and kept as such till the Game disappears, then the final reserve, of say, 50 or 75 acres, to each Indian or each "head of a family" can be made, and this will be *within five years*.⁹

Few settlers will want to go farther west from Manitoba before that time than Ft. Carlton. If they did wish to go they could settle anywhere along the North Saskatchewan and in that country between the International Line and the Belly River; this is the best part of the country for settlement, and would not interfere with the temporary reservations.

If the Game is not kept for the Indians, a general war will break out between them and the half Breed Plain Hunters.¹⁰ In an Indian Camp south of the Battle River from Victoria, I heard a chief of the Crees say "that the Indians would not allow us (meaning hunters) to kill any more of their game, that they

would be sorry to have to open a war with us, but that we could stay at home and have plenty of all kinds of food to eat, without robbing him of his only food." Naturally the Buffalo have retired to the most fertile, well wooded and watered, as well as the best climated, part of our possessions in the West, viz, the Blackfoot Territory.

If the troops are sent west without the Indians being placed on such reserves as I mentioned below, settlers, hearing of the fine country of the Bow River, will soon follow, and forming with the plains hunters, will engage in a war with the Indians, and united, the plain tribes will fight it out to the last, at a loss much greater to the Government than the maintaining of troops sufficient in number to guard reserves.¹¹ The Crees are very troublesome at Carlton, Pitt, Victoria, and Edmonton. I saw some at Victoria last spring who came in from the plains starving and demanded provisions from the settlers & the HBCo. There were no Buffalo on the plains all winter and they had suffered frightfully. They told us that many Indians had eaten their horses, dogs, buffalo-skins, and in some cases their snow-shoe laces & moccasins, and had then died.¹² How much worse will it be in a year hence?

There is no doubt that the Crees are getting very restless as they have been told each winter by the traders who visit Manitoba every spring for outfits of goods that treaties were to be made with them "on the succeeding" and no "Big Chiefs" yet having made their appearance, they now have the idea that no treaty is to be made with them, but that settlers are slowly moving west, occupying their country, killing their game, and burning the woods and prairies.

Miners prospecting on the Red Deer and other streams in the Black Foot country for gold, are alarming the Indians, who know that if it was found in large quantities, it would be the signal for a rush of adventurers, and that they would be compelled to retire from that part of their territory.¹³ A trail has been made across the country from Benton to Edmonton on the North Saskatchewan, and is used by the Whiskey traders to bring their supplies from the former to the latter place; this is but the beginning of an extensive trade, and the Indians, knowing this, look on the passage of parties by this track with great displeasure, and may at any time attack and destroy trains passing, and

so bring on a general war, in which the innocent people of Edmonton and Victoria will be the greatest sufferers.¹⁴

The surveyors who laid out the reserves round the HBCo.'s forts last winter also disturbed the Indians.¹⁵ At Victoria there was some difficulty about some claims belong to Indians having been included in the Co.'s reserve of 3,000 acres. The people of Victoria were very angry about it at the time, but how could they help it? I have been told by a number of Mr. Bell's geological survey party,¹⁶ that he was stopped and turned back by the Indians on the Bow River. These parties being sent out into the Indian Countries before any treaties have been made, is doing a great deal of harm.

There is a small band of Wood Crees at White Fish Lake, north of Victoria, who though true "wood" Indians, spend a part of the summer on the plains making provisions. This band gave some trouble at St. Paul's, near Victoria, last Spring; they stole some goods from a trader, and would give nothing in return. When found out, it shewed only plainly the defenceless condition of Victoria in case of any serious disturbance with them.

The Indians do not wish to have any liquor in the country, but say they cannot restrain their appetite for it when it is within their reach; this being the case, they would view it as a friendly act on the part of the Government if the trade was stopped. The Americans say they are willing to pay any moderate duty on the liquor they bring into the country, but will not cease to bring it in till compelled to do so by force of arms.

The slaughter of the Indians by the Americans some time ago has made the Tribes very suspicious of the whites, and no doubt it would have a good effect on them in the murderers could be arrested and punished; it would do a good deal to smooth the way to a final treaty.¹⁷

There will certainly be trouble with the plain Crees if word is not sent early to inform them of treaties to be made with them in the coming summer. Fts. Pitt, Victoria & Edmonton are very unprotected if any trouble should arise this spring.

There is no doubt there will be some trouble about the treaties and reserve; let them be managed as they may, for the policy of the American Outlaws will be to excite the Indians to make no treaties or go on reserves.



Bad Whiskey is already doing its work. The settlers expect protection in the shape of troops, and are much surprised that they are not out west before this time.

The Western Indian question has been passed without remark by the press and the public, and very few but those who have been west as far as Edmonton and mixed with the Half-breeds and Indians, know the great importance of it.

Herewith I give the only plan I can see possible to be adopted for a peaceful settlement of the "question."

1st. This would place each tribe in its own country and there they could be better treated with an their different wants attended to. The Crees, for instance, will be without game first and seed grain, farming implements, &c. given them when they are put on final reserve. Next will come the Blackfeet, and if they see that the Crees have been well treated, they would be more open to a final treaty. They could be better influenced by the Agents to accept final reservations when confined to their own countries. They would be held in check by a smaller number of troops.¹⁸

2nd. The amount of game now left on the plains should be kept for the Indian. He now knows no other manner of obtaining food but by the chase.¹⁹ If put on farms at once (as they will have to be if the Half-breeds and others are allowed to killed all the Buffalo), he will starve, but if the game is kept for him while he is learning something of farming,

This is a typical Red River cart that was used in the West. It is seen in Winnipeg in 1881.

when the time comes when the game is gone, he will more readily agree to go on reserve and farm for all time to come.

The White and Half-breed "Plain Hunters" already know something of farming, and as they will have to come to it in two or three years, even if they are allowed to kill the last of the Buffalo, they ought now to be sent to the settlements. By this means the two parties would not come in contact with each other. On the other hand, if the Plain Hunters continue after the Buffalo, the Indians will take a stand and fight it out which they have already shown their willingness to do this.

The French Half-breeds from Big Lake, who have moved south to Bull's Lake, have in a manner declared war, like the Americans, against the Blackfeet by taking up a position and building forts in the country of that tribe.

"Have a small detachment of mounted troops at each station and horse stealing would cease, as well as whiskey trading."

By keeping the game for the Indians, the bands of Buffalo, not being so hemmed in by hunters, would travel from the west into the Cree reserves on the east and so give the Crees a means of support till they could farm. If it is not done, the Crees will be without food within a year or eighteen months, and will then have to be fed by the Government to keep them from attacking the settlements along the North Saskatchewan.²⁰

If the Americans and Plain Hunters were kept out of the reserves (temporarily) a double object would be gained, viz., The delay of the final reserves until such time as the Indians would become more reconciled to them, and it would be shown that all was being done for their good, for they could be told, You have had the Buffalo to yourselves as long as they lasted, that they had been treated well and that the Government still means well by placing them on reserves.

But should they see the game all killed out by strangers and the Government doing nothing to prevent it when it was in their power to do so, is it likely they will quietly go on to reserves to starve before they know

anything of tilling the ground for their living? No, they will turn and fight it out to the last! and the present generation will never be thoroughly subdued.²¹

3rd. The Plain Hunters are divided into two classes. The first of these only go to the plains for one summer hunt to make pemican and dried meat for the winter's supply; they have generally a house and small farm in one of the various settlements on North Saskatchewan and put in a crop of potatoes, wheat and barley before going to the plains to be gathered on their return. The second live on the plains in lodges altogether with the Buffalo, making provisions and robes for sale to the traders. A few of them winter in a settlement but start for the plains again as soon as the snow disappears in the spring, and remain till the first fall of snow in the fall. Such places as Saddle Lake, St. Paul's, White Fish Lake, Red Deer Lake, and Big Lake are the wintering quarters of these people.

Of course the Half Breeds would strongly object to being excluded from the Buffalo, but it is better to offend a few than have an Indian war in which many innocent people would be murdered. The Americans will no doubt try to work on the Plain Hunters to give trouble, in any case, as it would be to their advantage if such a thing should occur. The Plain Hunters could settle round the different lakes which swarm with fine white fish & these could be made to a great extent a substitute for the Buffalo.²² Let the Government give them good fish nets, or the material for making them, till they are settled on their farms comfortably. If troops are sent West, roads, bridges, &c. will have to be made and repaired immediately; let this work be given to these people as well as the freighting of stores and provisions.

4th. Appoint certain places as the bounds of the temporary reserves for Agencies and then let the Trader who now travels about the Plains picking up robes here & there meet the Indians who would arrive with the product of several months' hunting.²³ The trader could give a higher price for fur as his expenses would not be as great as they are now. By this means the trading of liquor would be greatly lessened, as the chances to trade would not be as great. At the same time let the annuities be given, and, if they are in cash, it will return to the trader at once, and the money will be kept in the country instead of being sent out of the Dominion by

way of the Missouri. The Indians coming frequently to these stations would see the discipline of the troops stationed there, their superior arms, &c. &c.; they would soon fear the red-coat & it would do a great deal to prevent any disturbances on their part.

5th. This article speaks for itself. The mixture of Alcohol, pain-killer, tobacco juice and coloring matter is doing its work rapidly.

6th. Have a small detachment of mounted troops at each station and horse stealing would cease, as well as whiskey trading; only one or two examples would need to be made. There is nothing gives rise to as much trouble or as many wars amongst Indians as cases of horse-stealing.²⁴

7th. More Buffalo are slaughtered uselessly by driving them into ponds or pounds than by any other means. This practise could easily be stopped.²⁵

8th. Settlers could take up any land east of Carlton and on the west along the North Saskatchewan; there is also a tract of country between the Belly River and the International Line which could be settled without interfering with the Indians. In four or five years time the Indians might be put on their final reserves as the Buffalo will be gone and then the famous Bow River country could be thrown open to settlers.²⁶

Let the Government supply the most western settlers with arms, and as they are sure to be supplied with horses for farming use, they would be used as a mounted corps in case of any trouble.²⁷

This letter from Charles N. Bell is in the Morris Papers, MG12/B 1, #677, Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Notes

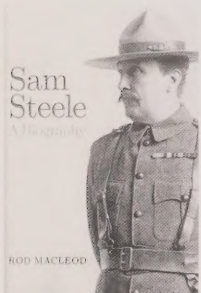
- 1 Bell was close in his estimate. The last large buffalo herds were exterminated over the winter of 1880-81 – in six or seven years, not four or five.
- 2 This was known as Tail Creek Settlement. It was made up not only of Metis from St. Albert but Crees and Assiniboines from the Lac Ste. Anne area. It began in 1872 and was virtually abandoned by 1878 when buffalo were gone from the area.
- 3 This treaty was made near The Nose in 1871. The leaders were Many Swans of the Blackfoot and Sweet Grass of the Cree. See “A Messenger of Peace,” in *The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt and Other Blackfoot Stories*, by Hugh Dempsey (Calgary: Fifth House, 67-79).
- 4 The treaties did not occur as quickly as they should have. The Saskatchewan Crees did not sign until 1876 and the Blackfoot until 1877.
- 5 This probably refers to the Baker massacre of 1870. In it, the American Army killed 173 Peigan Indians, mostly women and children, in a smallpox-ridden camp. The army learned afterwards it had attacked the wrong camp.

- 6 The trouble occurred when a large party of Metis from St. Laurent was hunting under the leadership of Gabriel Dumont. Big Bear joined their camp but did not feel bound by their military-type regulations. When two of his men were caught hunting buffalo when the Metis had forbidden it, Big Bear was ordered to explain. This resulted in a confrontation in which Dumont seized Big Bear's horse and harness and gained anger of the whole Cree camp.
- 7 Most of the buffalo robes were purchased by Americans. In 1875 alone some 75,000 robes were shipped south from Fort Benton.
- 8 The idea of a “temporary” reserve, or restricted hunting area, was never seriously considered. Enforcement would have been virtually impossible.
- 9 The government was more generous than Bell's suggestion. Under the treaties, reserves were based upon each family of five receiving 640 acres of land, or about 130 acres per person. Bell suggested 50 to 75 acres.
- 10 This never happened, in part due to the presence of the North-West Mounted Police less than a year later.
- 11 Again, this never happened.
- 12 For an account of this starvation winter see *My Tribe the Crees*, by Joseph F. Dion (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 70-75).
- 13 Gold was never found in paying quantities. After unsuccessfully prospecting in the southern Alberta foothills, panning was centred on the North Saskatchewan River near Edmonton where small quantities of gold were found.
- 14 Bell has greatly exaggerated the situation. The whiskey traders' trail extended north only to the Bow River. An extension of the route was made by Methodist missionaries and as a result was never threatened.
- 15 As part of the agreement to transfer Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Canadian government, the Company was permitted to keep its trading posts and the land immediately around them. In 1872, W.S. Gore was sent to survey these lands and the fact that these surveys took place before the treaties caused considerable anger and mistrust among the Indians.
- 16 In 1873, Robert Bell began geological surveys near the Elbow of the South Saskatchewan River. The Indians resented his presence prior to the treaty and Bell complained that “on several occasions Indians threatened to steal our horses & outfit & even to kill us all, and finally ordered us to turn back.” (Letter, Bell to Lieut Governor Alexander Morris, April 25, 1874, Library and Archives Canada, RG10/v.3604/f.2593.)
- 17 This is in reference to the Cypress Hills massacre in 1873 in which American whiskey traders killed at least 16 Assiniboines on Canadian soil. See “Whiskey, Horses and Death: The Cypress Hills Massacre and its Sequel,” by Philip Goldring, in *Canadian Historic Sites, Occasional Paper in Archaeology and History No. 21*, pp.41-70.
- 18 These suggestions were in line with what the government was thinking. After treaties were signed, reserves were laid out in areas requested by the tribes. Land was set aside on the basis of five people per square mile.
- 19 One of the first acts of the North-West Territorial Government in 1870 had been to impose hunting regulations. However, the government had no means of enforcing the regulations until the Mounted Police were in place.
- 20 The government was never able to place Crees and other tribes on reserves and introduce farming as long as there were buffalo to be hunted. As a result, the devastation that Bell feared did come to pass.
- 21 Bell was completely wrong in this instance. Rather than fighting to the end, the tribes recognized that the old way of life was disappearing and if they were to survive they had to listen to the Mounted Police and the government. As a result, the final decimation of the buffalo herds was relatively peaceful. The last herds were centred in Montana and onetime enemy tribe hunted side by side during the last months of 1880-81.
- 22 Bell shows his lack of knowledge of the Blackfoot, one of the leading Plains tribes, who refused to eat fish.
- 23 The time sequence did not occur in line with Bell's suggestion. By the time Indians settled on their reserves, the hunt was virtually over.
- 24 Bell was correct. This is what happened.
- 25 The use of buffalo jumps and pounds had already ended by the time Bell wrote his essay.
- 26 The suggestion of putting settlers on the land, particularly in the Belly River country, before the signing of treaties was both impractical and dangerous.
- 27 Fortunately, this never happened.

Book Reviews by the Editor

Sam Steele, A Biography

by Rod Macleod, 320 pp., illus., maps, soft cover.
Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, \$39.99.



Samuel Benfield Steele stands out as one of the prominent figures in the North-West Mounted Police and later as a military leader in the South African war. His contributions to the British Empire began

in 1873 when he was the fortieth man to enlist with the North-West Mounted Police. Over the next several years he faced turbulent Indians on the plains, warring Metis, railways strikers in British Columbia, miners in the Klondike gold rush, and Boer insurgents in South Africa. Through all of it, he proudly carried the British flag.

Steele started his career with Mounted Police as Inspector and served at various posts in the West. As a junior officer, he had his sights set on senior ranks within the Police. In 1886, for example, he applied for the position of Assistant Commissioner.

In the Klondike, Steele was given credit as the man who tamed the gold rush. But in spite of his success, he was recalled to Ottawa. He may have had enemies in Canada's capital, but he was a hero to those in the north. As he left his post he was praised by fellow policemen, Klondikers, and all three of Dawson City's newspapers.

When the South African War erupted, Steele accepted an offer by Lord Strathcona to raise a mounted unit. Attached to the British army, Lord Strathcona's Horse, played an important part in the war.

Author Rod Macleod has been thorough in his research, making extensive use of Samuel's diaries and personal papers now housed at the University of Alberta. The book is well written and places Steele in his proper role as Mounted Police frontiersman.

John Rae, Arctic Explorer.

The Unfinished Autobiography

by John Rae and William Barr. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 688 pp., maps, illustrations, hard cover. \$60.00.

John Rae was a Hudson's Bay Company employee who during his impressive career explored much of the north coast of North America. At first, he spent ten years as resident physician at Moose Factory. Then, in 1846 he launched his career as an explorer when he participated in a survey of Committee Bay. A year later, he started a six-year search for the missing Franklin Expedition, and finally revealed its tragic fate. During his career, Rae mapped some 1,550 miles of Arctic coastline and covered some 5,380 miles of northern travel. He later retired to England.

William Barr, who is a senior research associate of the Arctic Institute of North America, University of Calgary, took Rae's unfinished autobiography and, using the explorer's notes and correspondence, has produced a well rounded and important volume about this significant explorer.



Calgary Through the Eyes of Writers

by Shaun Hunter. Rocky Mountain Books, 282 pp., hard cover, \$30.

The criteria for selecting entries for this book are strange. How could one ignore the works of such authors as Grant MacEwan, Jack Peach, Donald B. Smith, and Max Foran – all well known for their writings about Calgary? Perhaps a better title might have been "Calgary Through the Eyes of the Literary Elite."

The book does deserve credit for bringing out of obscurity the scores of people that she quotes, including poets and fiction writers. As such, the book has value to show what people thought of Calgarians.

DONATIONS

Historical Society of Alberta

December 15, 2018 to March 15, 2019

Voyageur (\$100 to \$499, benefits 1-4)

Belinda Crowson, Marla J. Daniels, Martha & Leo Dawson, and Mary Esposito

Explorer (\$25 to \$99, benefits 1-4)

Francis Bodie, Marianne Fedori (in Memory of Donald Hepburn), Theresa Ferguson, G.M. Holst, Debra L. Klein, Ernest A. Marshall, Dr. R.G. Moyles, Michael Nugent, Harvey & Carol Schultz, Patricia Sparrow, Paul J. Sutherland, Rod Trentham, and Ronald Williams

Legacy 2019

Donations to the Legacy 2019 Fund will be published in the Autumn issue.

Benefits to donating to the Historical Society of Alberta:

1. Tax receipts (less membership fee)
2. Acknowledgement in annual report
3. Acknowledgement in *Alberta History*
4. One subscription to *Alberta History* (for non-members)
5. Signed copy of new books published
6. Acknowledgement on donor board in H.S.A. office
7. Complimentary invitation to annual awards banquet or other events
8. Special donor's reception
9. Bronze acknowledgement plaque

Category:	Donation	Benefit
Explorer	\$25 - 99	1 - 4
Voyageur	\$100 - 499	1 - 4
Pioneer	\$500 - 999	1 - 4
Bronze Pathfinder	\$1,000 - 4,999	1 - 5
Silver Pathfinder	\$5,000 - 9,999	1 - 6
Gold Pathfinder	\$10,000 - 39,999	1 - 7
Partner	\$40,000 - 99,999	1 - 8
Statesman	\$100,000 +	1 - 9

Photo Credits

Editor's files, Calgary - p.7, p.9, p.11, p.12, p.15, & p.21.

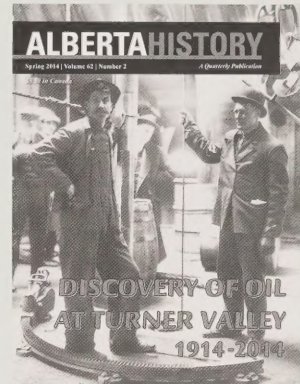
Glenbow Archives, Calgary - outside front cover, p.1 & p.3, NA-3469-1; p.5, NA-249-100; p.19, NA-1440-4; p.25 & front inside cover, NA-843-1.

STILL AVAILABLE!

Alberta History has been published quarterly since 1953 and some copies still are available.

SPRING 2014, *Turner Valley Oil Discovery Issue*

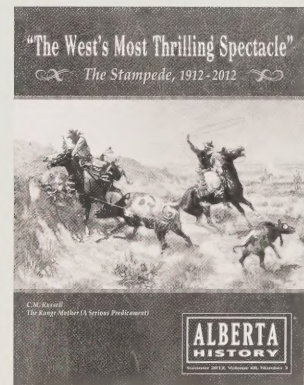
- A history of Turner Valley
- Beginning of Turner Valley
- Pictorial history of Turner Valley
- News Reports in 1914 of Turner Valley



\$5.00

SUMMER 2012, *Special Stampede Issue*

- Guy Weadick's own story
- Ernie Richardson's role in the Stampede
- Charlie Russell and Guy Weadick
- A history of Stampede Park
- Stampede Queens
- The Zeitgeist of Western Settlement
- Pageantry of the 1925 Stampede
- Poetry of the Stampede
- Stampede postcards and how to date them
- Chuckwagon racing
- Art and the Stampede



\$10.00

For postage and handling, add \$3.00.

Historical Society of Alberta
Box 4035, Station C, Calgary, T2T 5M9
Phone 403.261.3662
albertahistory@telus.net

3 1761 11547368 8

Events in Alberta History

"While it must be regretfully admitted that there has been, and is, talk in the West of the prairie provinces seceding from the Confederation, and while those who advocate secession advance substantial reasons why they should claim that the western provinces would flourish more as a crown colony independent of Eastern Canada, yet it will not be admitted that the successionists are in the majority."

Calgary News Telegram, March 4, 1912.